

For Immediate Release

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Contact: Charles Pyle
Director of Communications
(804) 371-2420
Julie C. Grimes
Communications Manager
(804) 225-2775

SAT Scores of Virginia's Public School Students Increase in Reading, Writing & Mathematics as More Minority Students Participate

Student Achievement on Advanced Placement Tests Continues to Rise

The performance of Virginia public school graduates on the SAT improved significantly in 2008 in all three tested areas, according to results released today by the College Board. Although the total number of Virginia public school students taking the SAT dropped by 2.3 percent, the number of minority students taking the tests increased, with minority students now making up one-third of all test takers.

In addition, Virginia saw sharp increases in the number of Virginia public school students taking Advanced Placement (AP) tests, the number of AP tests taken and the number of test results qualifying for college credit. Virginia minority student results also rose significantly with black, Hispanic and Asian students showing double-digit increases in all three areas.

"I am proud of our students, their parents and our educators, who are demonstrating that by joining forces, we can achieve our academic goals," Governor Timothy M. Kaine said. "We will continue to set the bar high for ourselves so that we build on this momentum and so that more Virginia students can make college graduation a reality."

"These results validate Virginia's commitment to high academic standards and indicate that Virginia students are confident in their ability to undertake college-level coursework," said Superintendent of Public Instruction Billy K. Cannaday Jr. "Students who might not have considered taking the SAT or AP courses a few years ago are now doing so and are achieving success."

2008 SAT Results

Virginia public school students achieved a two-point increase over 2007 on the writing portion of the SAT and one-point increases in both critical reading and mathematics. The commonwealth's 508 average score in reading was 11 points higher than the national average for public school students while Virginia's public school average of 496 in writing was eight points higher than the nationwide mean. Virginia public school graduating seniors achieved an average score of 510 on the mathematics portion of the SAT, the same as their peers nationwide. A total of 50,465, or 63 percent, of Virginia public school graduates took the SAT compared with 51,677 in 2007. Virginia ranks tenth in the nation in public school participation in SAT testing.

The overall average scores of Virginia high school seniors — including private and home-schooled students — increased in two areas. The overall averages of 512 in mathematics and 499 in writing each represented one-point improvements over 2007. The overall average score for reading was unchanged at 511.

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SAT Minority Results

African-American, Asian and Hispanic public school students in Virginia outperformed their peers nationwide on all three sections of the test. Black students accounted for 19.5 percent of Virginia public school students taking the SAT in 2008, compared with 12.5 percent nationwide.

2008 SAT Mean Scores

Group	Critical Reading		Mathematics		Writing	
	Virginia	Nation	Virginia	Nation	Virginia	Nation
Asian	526	512	572	569	523	512
Black	432	425	427	424	423	419
Hispanic	485	449	485	457	472	442
White	532	524	533	535	518	513

On the critical reading portion of the SAT, Virginia Hispanic public school students' results were one point higher in 2008 — at 485 — compared with 2007; the achievement of Asian students increased by eight points to 526; and African-American students' slipped two points to 432.

On the mathematics portion of the SAT, black students' average score remained the same at 427, Asian students' results increased by eight points to 572 and Hispanic achievement slipped one point to 485.

On the writing portion of the SAT, Asian students' results increased by 12 points to 523 in 2008, Hispanic students' results increased by two points to 472 and African-American students' results increased by one point to 423.

The number of black public school students in Virginia taking the SAT increased by 2.7 percent, while the number of Asian test takers rose 5.8 percent and Hispanic participation was up 0.8 percent.

2008 Advanced Placement Results

The number of Virginia public school students who took at least one AP test increased by 8.8 percent, from 49,834 in 2007 to 54,219 in 2008. Public school students in the commonwealth took 97,480 AP examinations in 2008, an increase of 8.1 percent over 2007 when 90,198 tests were taken.

The number of examinations taken by public school students in Virginia earning a score of three or above increased by 5.2 percent, from 53,920 in 2007 to 56,714. In its *2008 Advanced Placement Report to the Nation*, issued in February, the College Board ranked Virginia third in the nation in the percentage of high school seniors earning a grade of three or better on at least one AP examination.

AP Minority Results

Minority students accounted for one third of all Virginia public school students taking AP exams in 2008, and AP test takers identifying themselves as either African American, Asian or Hispanic showed double-digit increases in the percentages of test takers, exams taken and scores of three or above. The number of black public school graduates in Virginia taking at least one AP test increased by 21 percent, Hispanic participation was up 13.3 percent and Asian participation rose by 11.7 percent.

2008 AP Participation & Achievement

Group	Test Takers		Exams Taken		Number of 3-5 Scores	
	Total	Change from last year	Total	Change from last year	Total	Change from last year
Asian	6,558	11.7%	13,854	12.6%	8,393	10.6%
Black	5,319	21.0%	7,988	19.1%	2,545	16.2%
Hispanic	3,096	13.3%	5,099	12.4%	2,658	10.5%
White	35,031	7.0%	62,914	6.3%	38,796	3.5%

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The number of African-American public school seniors in Virginia who earned a score of three or better on at least one AP test increased by 16.2 percent and the number of Hispanic public school students achieving this distinction increased by 10.5 percent. The percentage of Asian public school students achieving a three or better on at least one AP exam rose by 10.6 percent.

“The increase in the percentage of students — especially minority students — taking AP courses shows that high schools are responding to the Board of Education’s goal of increasing enrollment in college-level courses to at least 25 percent,” Board President Mark E. Emblidge said.

Increasing the number of high school students who successfully complete college-level courses is also one of Governor Kaine’s goals for promoting excellence in public education. Virginia encourages participation in AP courses through the Early College Scholars Program and the Virtual Virginia online academy. Last year, 1,954 students took AP courses through Virtual Virginia, which ensures that students in all Virginia high schools have access to a variety of AP courses.

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